



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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## LEGISLATORS: LET VOTERS REIN IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD

**MADISON** – Legislation to give people in Milwaukee County a stronger voice is gaining traction in the Wisconsin State Legislature. On Friday, State Senator Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) joined State Representative Joe Sanfelippo (R-West Allis) to begin seeking co-sponsors of a bill to reform the Milwaukee County Board. The legislation would authorize a binding referendum to let voters decide the salaries of county supervisors and make the position part-time. Representative Sanfelippo says the bill will let voters rein in their elected officials.

“Milwaukee County already has trouble paying its bills. There doesn’t seem to be enough money for vital services like transportation and public safety, let alone the zoo, our museums and parks,” Sanfelippo said, “By restoring a part-time board to Milwaukee County, as we have in every other county in the state, we will empower citizen-legislators to bring new ideas and fresh energy to Milwaukee County.”

The proposed legislation will let voters bring Milwaukee County in line with other county boards in Wisconsin and the nation by:

- **Empowering Citizen Legislators:** Restoring the position to part-time status will enable a more diverse group of residents to participate in board governance. It will also focus the board’s attention on broader policy issues, fostering a healthier division of responsibilities between the legislative and executive branches. The legislation would limit board compensation to \$15,000 annually for the part-time position (down from \$50,679 currently) and eliminate health and pension benefits.
- **Reining in Board Costs:** Currently, the Milwaukee County board spends \$6.5 million annually on its operations, nearly three times as much as other counties in the state and peer counties nationally, whether measured as a percentage of the overall budget or on a per capita basis. The legislation would limit the board’s budget to no more than 0.40% of the county’s overall tax levy, restoring parity to the legislative and executive branches of Milwaukee County’s government.
- **Free Up Resources for Transit, Parks:** If passed, the legislation would save Milwaukee County millions of dollars annually, freeing up much-needed resources for transit, parks and other key county services – without additional taxes. It would also bring the cost of board governance closer to its statewide and national peers.

In spring of 2012, residents of 12 Milwaukee County municipalities indicated their desire for change when more than 80 percent of voters supported a nonbinding referendum regarding county board reform. Senator Darling says voters are still hungry for reform.

“This bill is all about local control,” Darling said, “It lets voters decide what’s more important; parks or politicians.”

The bill already has the support from a broad range of community leaders, including leadership of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Council and the Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC).